



Kennecott- Bonanza Ridge

Access: Trailhead north of Kennecott Mill Town

Distance: Approximately 28 miles round trip (loop).

Time: 7-8 days

Maps: USGS Maps-McCarthy (B-6), (B-5), (C-6), (C-5) 1:63,360; McCarthy 1:250,000

Difficulty: Strenuous with moderate route finding

Route:

Walk the road through the Kennecott Mill Town. When the road curves to the right; take the trail leading off to the left. After approximately ¼ mile, cross the Bonanza Creek footbridge. After approximately 1 mile, the trail curves sharply to the right and upstream. Here, cross the Jumbo Creek footbridge. After approximately another ¼ mile, the trail reaches the Root Glacier access trail. Primitive campsites, along with an outhouse and food lockers, are available in this area.



Continue on the main trail parallel to the glacier for approximately 2 miles. From here you will be able to see the Erie Mine bunkhouse high above on the hillside to the right of the trail, and the Root Glacier below on the left, as well as views of the Stairway Icefall. Follow the top of the moraine until you are cut off by a steep ridge. Here you must climb down over loose scree to the edge of the glacier.

Once down along the glacier, below the steep ridge, you can follow the trough that has been formed between the glacier ice and the lateral moraine. It is relatively flat. After several hundred yards, you will be forced to hike onto the glacier ice. It is relatively flat and is possible to hike without crampons in warm and sunny weather with boots with good traction. However, in cloudy or cold weather the glacier becomes hard and very slippery making crampons essential. Additionally, the crevasses are exposed to view.

The glacier has dammed a lake to your right. You will want to hike around this lake on the ice several hundred yards to the left of the lake (it generally drains by mid-June and has numerous large icebergs beached in the basin).



View of the Stairway Icefall

As you cross the glacier, you will see a waterfall straight ahead on the east side of the glacier. Use this as a landmark while you cross the glacier. Try to diagonal towards it. You will be hiking up the brushy hillside to the right of the waterfall. Diagonal across the rock covered portion of the glacier to reach the lateral moraine a couple hundred yards to the right of the waterfall, with your final destination being the top of the waterfall. It gets extremely brushy near the top of the waterfall.

From the top of the waterfall, hike up the stream watching for the trail on the left hand side of the water. The trail leads to an area suitable for camping on top of the "knob" or "knoll" (elevation 3800'). This is a beautiful spot which offers one of the best views of the Stairway Icefall. From here you are going to cross Bonanza Ridge and drop down into the McCarthy Creek drainage to the east. From the knob you can look along the ridge and see the lower pass that you will be hiking through, a 5400' pass between P5905' and P6506'.

From the knob, hike down to the north, winding your way down through the low brush to reach the top of the moraine. Follow the top of the moraine to reach the foot of the hillside leading to the pass. Hike up the grassy hillside, and then rock scree to the low pass. A campsite can be made in the loose shale in the pass. The pass offers views to the west across the Donoho Peak ridge towards Mt. Blackburn, and to the east of the peaks above McCarthy Creek and the glaciers flowing off the flanks of Regal Mountain. You will be hiking down the stream drainage that drops off the east side of the ridge into the McCarthy Creek Valley .

Potential Hazards:

- Travel with caution near and around glacial melt pools and river potholes. The fine glacier silt may look dry but it can be very slippery. The melt pools are also extremely cold.
- Check the water level and passability of McCarthy Creek with local residents or at the Kennecott Visitor Center before beginning your hike. The water level may be too high to cross and you may need to change your route accordingly. Care should always be taken with creek crossings.



McCarthy Creek

Hike down the hillside to reach the valley floor below. The trail along McCarthy Creek cuts back and forth across the stream several times as it goes down the valley. The trail may be hard to follow as it is not regularly maintained. You may want to follow the easiest path down the stream to avoid the brush.

About 5 miles down the valley is a private airstrip on the East side of the river with a small portion of the property reaching to the West side of the river. The Motherlode Mine tram station (private property) is about one mile down river on the East side. Please do not trespass. This property is marked on the in the detail section of the Trails Illustrated Map. The trail below the tram station crosses McCarthy Creek several times and follows the historic route. Additionally, recent activity by some local residents makes the route from here to McCarthy appear more as a road than a trail. It should be straightforward to follow below the private home site. When you reach the town of McCarthy, residents have put up a bridge across McCarthy Creek which makes it easy for hikers to get back across the creek.